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LETTERS FROM A TEACHER TO HER YOUNG FEMALE FRIEND, JUST
ABOUT COMMENCING TO KEEP SCHOOL.

No. IV.

My dear L—: After having clearly explained the equator, the ecliptic, the tropics, and polar circles, and drawn the outlines of the continents upon your globe, which will show your scholars that there is much more land north of the equator than south of it, it will be well to make it as clear as possible to them, how the earth hangs in space in relation to the stars, and then tell them which part is called north, in relation to these stars. An intelligent child will soon ask you, how you know which way the earth turns over, and how you know when it has completed a revolution on its axis. One of your illustrations is the rising and setting of the sun; but there are sometimes cavillers even among the little people called “the spelling public;” and, if they do not choose to take it upon your testimony, supported by that proof, there is another way to convince them. You must now recur to the sky. Of course, you know where to look for the north star, as well as which way to go to your schoolhouse; but to excite the interest of your scholars, you may tell them that if, on any bright evening in the year when the stars are out, they will stand on the steps of the church, which faces the north, and look in the direction of Colonel T.’s barn, they will see, on the right-hand corner of the roof, a bright star. There it appears at all seasons and at all hours, and it is called the *polar star*, because it is directly opposite the north pole of the earth, which, in all its revolutions, forever points to that spot. Two stars, nearly in the middle of the Great Bear, always point directly to this polar star, and are, for this reason, called the “Pointers.” Sometimes they stand above it, sometimes below it, sometimes on one, and then on the other side of it, because this constellation is seen in different positions by us, as we revolve with the earth, but precisely in that same spot, in relation to the polar star. In the most ancient times of which we have any history, as well as much later in point of time, men guided their small vessels, and were directed even in their journeys by land, through forests and across deserts, by this star. It did not always answer the purpose, because it was sometimes obscured by clouds, but it was all the guide men had, (I mean those men who lived far enough north to see it at all times,) till the discovery of the magnetic needle, which points to the north in all weathers, and under all ordinary circumstances. You can illustrate the relation between the earth and polar star by

fixing upon the wall, in a straight line from the north pole of your globe, as it hangs suspended, a bit of colored paper, and then turning the globe in your hands, in such a manner that your pupils will see the pole remain ever opposite to the star. You can do even more than this. Sketch upon a large sheet of paper the constellation of the Great Bear and the Little Bear, in their proper relations for the time of the year, and place this upon the wall opposite the north pole of your globe. I have a fine work upon astronomy, which is accompanied by representations of the various constellations upon separate cards. I can easily arrange these in the proper manner, and their gorgeous colors make a great impression upon the eye and the memory; but I doubt whether it answers the purpose any better than the sketch made with a pen, such as I have proposed. For the most splendid, and even the most convenient apparatus for illustrating these things, is not, after all, of so much importance, as a clear understanding of the subject on the part of the teacher. You will readily agree with me, that without this clear understanding on her part, all the apparatus in the world would be of no avail. I sometimes think the effort I make to contrive a mode of illustration that will be intelligible, is of more use to me, in my undertaking, and a greater guaranty of success, than any apparatus would be with which I might be furnished.

Before returning to the delineations on the surface of the globe, I advise you to say something about the great features of astronomy. After you have caused it to be understood, that the earth moves round the sun once every year, it will be easy to attach to this fact some comprehension of the solar system. Eleven other planets, some of which are larger, some smaller, than the earth, also revolve round the sun. Two of these are nearer to it than the earth, eight further off. Those that are nearer perform their revolutions in a less time than our year. Make a list of these eleven planets on your black-board, in the order of their distances, with the period of their revolutions, their distances from the sun, and their respective sizes, with the number of moons, &c., to be committed to memory.

In your lessons in arithmetic, I hope you have taken pains to give your scholars some grand notions of the vastness of numbers;—for instance, as good a notion as possible of what a million is. Otherwise, when you mention these vast planetary distances, the words will be mere counters, and convey not the slightest idea of the reality. If you have not done this, it will be well to arrest their attention now. Say to them that you wish them to try to measure by their imaginations those immense portions of space which, great as they are, are in fact mere specks when compared with the reality. It would take one almost a whole month to count a million, supposing one counts for ten hours, every day, and one each second. Let your scholars count a thousand, or even a hundred, and measure by that how long it would take them to count a million, and then they will better understand what you mean, when you tell them that the earth is nearly a hundred of these millions of miles from the sun, and that one of the planets of the solar system is *nineteen* times further off than the earth.

An orrery would be valuable to you here; but as you have none, you must draw your sun on the black-board, and the orbits of the planets around it, in as good proportion as you can to their respective distances.

A book has been published lately, in Glasgow, making more generally known some of the recent discoveries of Herschel. The substance of them I have been able to make interesting to my little scholars, though I am very well aware that it requires the educated imagination I have before spoken of, to take any adequate views of the subject.

In former times, it was even supposed that the firmament of stars which we see, was constructed in the shape of a hollow half-globe, shut down over the earth, (which was supposed to be a flat plain,) like the cover of a dish, and meeting on its edges the extremity of the plain. Since that time, however, great discoveries have been made in science, by means of which much has been learned of the nature and motions of the heavenly bodies, some of which have been here mentioned. Among other things, instruments have been invented, by which men can see immeasurably far, beyond the remotest stars that our naked eye discerns, on the clearest night, in our firmament. Gradual improvements have brought these instruments to such a degree of perfection, that, by their aid, we can now penetrate into space *one hundred and ninety-two* times further than we can by the naked eye. This increase of the power of vision, by artificial means, may be better explained by comparing our eye with one which would have the same power as the forty-feet telescope of Herschel. If all the light that falls upon it were reflected,—which is not the case, because much of it is scattered in falling upon so large a lens,—an eye *four feet in diameter* would hardly equal it in power. I have mentioned, in a former letter, that there is a star, in our firmament, visible to the naked eye, so remote that no attempt has ever been made to measure its distance. At one time, after making a considerable sweep with his instrument, Herschel writes—"The appearance of Sirius announced itself at a great distance, like the dawn of the morning, and came on by degrees, increasing in brightness, till this brilliant star at last entered the field of the telescope, with all the splendor of the rising sun, and forced me to take my eye from the beautiful sight."

Your scholars may be prepared, after hearing a description of the telescope and its powers, to credit the details you can give them of some of the discoveries already made by its means. When we look through the telescope, then, it is plain that the firmament of stars which we see, forms but one of innumerable clusters situated in space. We look far beyond the remotest verge of the cluster to which we belong, and, in the deep blue spaces, see a thousand other such clusters, some of which are of much larger dimensions than ours, and of various shapes. The one in which our solar system moves is of a circular form. We seem to be situated at the side, and towards one end, of the galaxy, (which is a semi-ring of stars,) so that when we look in the direction of the circle or ring, a crowd of stars present themselves to our vision; but when we look outward, or at right angles to the course of the ring, we look into comparatively void spaces in the heavens, and therefore see but few.

This semi-ring is what we call the milky way, and in it our solar system moves, the earth being in such an eccentric position that it accounts for the vastly superior brilliancy of this magnificent girdle in southern latitudes. Every one can see the milky way on a bright, starry evening; it is that path of white stars which seems to stretch

over the sky, and which has this appearance, partly from the circumstance of the stars being very near together, and partly from the diffusion of a brilliant substance between the stars, and often encircling them as an atmosphere. This substance is called *star-dust*, and astronomers suppose it to be the material out of which stars are gradually formed. The plates in this book represent many of these clusters of stars, precisely as they appear on the field of the telescope. Representations of masses of the star-dust are also given,—sometimes encircling and apparently pouring in, from the circumference of the mass to a central star, as if feeding it with more light and starriness. I have copied with white paint, upon a black-board which stands in my schoolroom, some of these plates, exhibiting the actual shape of our cluster, the form it presents to our eye, standing, as we do, on the verge of it, in the milky way; and also a few other clusters and stars, some of which are surrounded with this luminous atmosphere of star-dust.

Do not expect, my dear L., after you have exhausted all the powers of language, to find that you have actually conveyed an adequate notion of these astronomical facts, or one which can compare with your own conception of them; and yet do not be discouraged. After a child has once stretched his powers to try to comprehend the vastness you speak of, he will feel emotions of sublimity which will render him less likely than ever before, it seems to me, to rest satisfied with a limited view of any thing. I know of no study which has such a grand and exciting influence upon the imagination, and, through that, upon the character, as astronomy. We sometimes hear those who are advanced in life, and who have been made, by misfortune, by morbid feeling, or perhaps by guilt, to feel that nothing is of any worth but moral and spiritual truths, (nor would I compare their value with mere intellectual truth,) say, that science is narrowing to the mind, and express an unaccountable want of interest in it. But they should remember that the innocent and happy child may be led more easily and naturally than they have been to the conception of those wonderful spiritual truths, by being fed with these vast conceptions of time and space, and these worlds of wonders. Let children know God in his works which they can see and understand, and they will more easily learn to know, by and by, what he has done for them in the still more wonderful spiritual world. The attempt to conceive immense regions of space, not to be expressed intelligibly in numbers, will help to the conception of endless duration of existence, of which they often hear, without attaching any meaning to the words. While the imagination is young and salient, it should be fed with the food it craves,—with the marvellous, not of fiction, but of fact. This will be the best preservative against its ever having recourse, for excitement or interest, to the mere extravagances of fancy, which make the mind unhealthy, and unfit it for its highest uses.

M.

He that enlarges his curiosity after the works of nature, demonstrably multiplies the inlets of happiness; therefore we should cherish ardor in the pursuit of useful knowledge, and remember that a blighted spring makes a barren year, and that the vernal flowers, however beautiful and gay, are only intended by nature as preparatives to autumnal fruits.—*Johnson*.

[The Editor of the NORFOLK DEMOCRAT is publishing a series of admirable articles, entitled "OUR COMMON SCHOOLS." From them, we shall select two very valuable ones, on the importance of District-School Libraries.—Ed.]

OUR COMMON SCHOOLS.—No. IX.

MR. EDITOR: In this paper I wish to call the attention of your readers to the project of furnishing each school district with the volumes composing the School Library. Its novelty, its magnitude, and the proposed method of executing it, have procured it enemies. But I am fully satisfied, that no man can reasonably oppose it, who gives it a thorough consideration, and who remembers, that, after all, it is entirely optional with towns and districts to receive it or not. In this age, when books are multiplied like leaves in autumn, and furnished at prices unprecedentedly low,—when books of every variety of character and cast, are to be found in every bookseller's shop,—it may seem a work of supererogation to devise new methods of supplying the community with an article, which is no longer a necessity, but a luxury of life. But I think this an imperfect view of the subject. Not to go over the whole ground of argument in favor of the project,—a work thoroughly and successfully accomplished by the Secretary of the Board of Education,—it will be sufficient for my present purpose to observe, that the plan of the Board is intended and calculated to satisfy a want in our social condition,—a grievous deficiency in our means of intellectual instruction. We talk of the multitude of books. This, however, is comparative only. There are a great many books; but not so many as there should be.

Again; we are a bustling, hurrying, superficial generation; too busy in our pursuits to read much beyond a newspaper, or any thing more profound than an almanac or a novel. Of this description is the majority of the reading community. Now the supply is adapted to the demand both in quantity and quality. Innumerable books are printed, which had better not have been printed; and many, many precious hours are wasted, or worse than wasted, in reading that which contributes nothing to intellectual development and growth. The circle of readers has prodigiously enlarged within a few years; but it may, with great reason, be questioned, whether the number of scholars and thinkers has been increased. The foundation of the doubt is obvious,—men do not read to think, or to acquire materials of thought;—but to avoid the trouble of thinking,—to dissipate their minds, and wear away the tedium of time. Hence results the superficial, unfinished character of so large a portion of our people,—the shallowness, the want of solidity in their attainments. Hence it is, that so few turn what little acquisition they make in early life, to practical and substantial good. In this light, the number of books in existence and in circulation, furnishes no argument against the proposed School Library; for this is to be of another character, and to fill a void which exists in the means of popular improvement. It is to be hoped, that if the plan of the School Library succeed, it will have *this* among other consequences,—to *diminish* the number of books by substituting a few *good* books in the place of many bad or indifferent ones. Every friend to mental discipline and thorough

preparation for active usefulness, must decide the result. How few are there of the books most in circulation, that *can* furnish to the undisciplined mind sources of profitable reflection ! What such a mind needs is excitement, energy, action ; and these can be induced only by works of a higher character than those we are now contemplating. The besetting sin of almost all readers is a disposition to mental lethargy,—to seek amusement rather than instruction,—or to dispense with instruction, if it can be acquired only by painful effort,—by persevering application. Whatever checks or restrains this disposition, or introduces a severer mental discipline, or loftier ideas of the end of literary attainments, will be a benefit to this generation, that no words of mine can express. He will be a benefactor to the community, who shall succeed in teaching it that reading for diversion alone, though it may sometimes be harmless, is always the most unprofitable of literary exercises. True it is, that most of the current reading *must be* superficial ; for there *is no* depth in it. It did not originate in profound minds. It does not contribute to the formation of such minds. This consideration supplies a powerful motive for our hearty union in establishing the School Library in every district ; for this Library is composed of works of the highest intellectual character in the various departments of Art, Science, Literature, Biography, History, and the application of scientific principles to the business of life. It will be seen, that it is adapted to adults and children ; consisting, in fact, of two series, one for the former, and one for the latter. The character of the persons composing the Board of Education is a sufficient pledge, that the works published by their authority, will not only be adapted to the wants of the people, but free also from those political and religious peculiarities, which have no business in the domain of literature. The low rate at which they are sold, the beauty of the paper and type, and the strength of the binding, furnish additional reasons for their being purchased. The same amount of literary ware, in a form equally attractive and elegant, cannot be procured of the booksellers for less than an advance of twenty-five or thirty per cent. above the price charged for these works.

But the great argument in their favor is,—that if this Library be introduced into every school district in the State, it will furnish a vast amount of useful, practical, highly valuable information, that will go far towards banishing the vapid, trashy collection of books, now found in circulating libraries, and in the libraries of indolent and fashionable readers. Suppose there are in a town five districts, each possessing this Library of one hundred volumes ;—it cannot but be, that five hundred volumes of the character here contemplated, should, within a few years, occasion a decided and beneficial revolution in the intellectual pursuits and tastes of the people. So much good seed sown in a fertile soil must produce good fruit. A taste for reading,—for profitable reading,—will gradually be formed, which will conduce to the highest and purest intellectual pleasures. The contemplation of beautiful models in the department of arts awakens and develops a taste for the beautiful. So the study of the works of the great literary masters, in their various departments, enkindles the love of literary excellence ; while the attainment of important facts and principles enriches the mind, and contributes to the enjoyment and the embellishment of social life. Dr. Johnson remarks that the peasant and the philosopher may be equally satisfied, but not equally happy.

The peasant is merely satisfied in stolid ignorance, while the philosopher, possessing numerous materials of thought and reflection, enjoys an intense happiness. Our people need, above all other civilized nations, these fountains of pleasure to counteract the prevailing tendencies to worldliness and avarice. Let an abundance of good books be always at hand, and any indisposition to use them will finally be overcome. This Library will contain such books, as may safely be put into the hands of youth, or of maturer age. They are written by our first writers; published in a style of almost unequalled beauty, and at a cheap price; and adapted, by the variety of their contents, to the various classes and capacities of our citizens. The physical comfort and the social welfare of our community cannot fail to be increased; while their intellectual discipline and activity will find wholesome employment, and their moral feelings will be invigorated and purified.

Some further remarks upon this subject, including a notice of the various methods of securing the possession of the School Library, will occupy another paper.

J. M. M.

OUR COMMON SCHOOLS.—No. X.

MR. EDITOR: In my last communication, I introduced the important subject of the proposed School Library, and, among other remarks, observed that the introduction and use of a few good books might eventually diminish the number of bad ones. But speaking of the multitudes of books in circulation, we must remember, that books are numerous only comparatively. Compared with the books in general circulation thirty years ago, the number is now very large. Of the quality I say nothing, in this connection. Yet this multiplicity of books is usually found in cities and large villages only, where the general excitement and activity of social life might, in some measure, dispense with them;—whereas, in country towns, the thinly-scattered population are, in a great degree, destitute of books. Here is where they are most needed,—to beguile the tedium of solitude, and to lead to profitable reflections, minds that otherwise might become the prey of vicious or indolent habits. We, who live in the country, know that this is the case. We visit each other's houses. We cannot help seeing the lamentable scarcity of useful books. In every house, we find the Bible and Almanac,—and perhaps a few volumes of miscellaneous works,—an odd volume of an old magazine, or travels, or stories of bloody murder, or the fortune-teller's manual, or a fashionable novel, or some other equally stale and unprofitable books. These are usually laid away upon a shelf, covered with dust, and in course of time forgotten. It would be a grievous imputation upon the common sense and common curiosity of our people, to suppose, that they would, in these circumstances, be indifferent to a collection of the best works on Art, Science, History, Agriculture, and general Literature.

As the case stands, they read but little, because they have little worth reading, because their attention is not excited by the presence of a good library, and because an indolent habit has been induced by these facts. And how do they spend their leisure time, their winter evenings and Sundays? Either looking listlessly into the fire, or in

unprofitable conversation, or in needless sleep. Is this the manner in which *they* should consume their time, who *are* or who *are to be* our voters, rulers, legislators?—on whom the destinies of our community are to repose! Is it consistent with a just self-respect for them to pass through life in stupid ignorance of the objects around them, and of subjects in which they have the deepest interest?

How many things are there connected with agriculture, which might be turned to immediate profit, of which our farmers are totally ignorant? How slender is their stock of knowledge upon themes most nearly allied to the profitable use of land! Among the distinguishing and encouraging features of our times is the application of scientific principles to the pursuits of agriculture; thereby ennobling those pursuits, and rendering them more sure of success. The day has passed, when men could sneer at a farmer, who refused to increase his stock of learning, or ridiculed “book-farming.” For it is discovered that book-farming has its advantages, and that innumerable benefits result to the whole agricultural community from the researches, and the experiments, and the improvements of the learned. In the School Library is a volume specially devoted to this subject, written by the late Judge Buel; a volume which, if generally studied, must produce good results, if in no other way, yet by exciting farmers to think and act for themselves.

Another volume is devoted to the application of science to the useful arts,—one of the most interesting, agreeable, and instructive of intellectual topics. This could not fail to attract the attention of mechanics and manufacturers, and many others, who have any curiosity.

Other volumes treat of the history of our country. Nothing but intercourse with society could convince us of the wonderful ignorance which prevails respecting the early and middle portion of our own history. Many persons have heard, that there were people called Pilgrims, who landed many years ago at Plymouth, but know as little of their character, principles, and aims as of the inhabitants of Greenland. The most that thousands know of William Penn is, that he was a Quaker, and settled at Philadelphia;—of his religious doctrines, of his pacific counsels, or their successful application and results, they know comparatively nothing. It is to be hoped, that most of our adult population have read the history of the Revolution,—though it must not be affirmed too strongly. Yet it may safely be said, that the history of the fifty years preceding the Revolution, is almost unknown to the majority of the inhabitants of New England. In that time, institutions were consolidating, principles were taking root, and habits were forming, which occasioned the necessity of a Revolution, and led immediately to its occurrence. How, then, can the history of the Revolution be correctly understood, or the motives of our fathers be appreciated, without a knowledge of the history of the period preceding it?

These illustrations might be indefinitely extended into every department of knowledge. There is need that some impetus should be given to the cause of general information; for many of our young men are growing up wholly unprepared to assume the responsibilities and perform the duties of maturer life. They need to improve their minds, to ascertain the foundation on which their knowledge rests, to increase their stock of useful facts and principles, and to go into life with the

distinct consciousness of their position as citizens of a free Commonwealth. The introduction and use of good books are not the only thing required ; but *these* are preëminently important. Every thing that conduces to this result is to be hailed as the harbinger of good. We look forward to the time, when our young men and young women shall have their minds so well disciplined and cultivated, that they will be able to talk of something besides the weather, and to think of something of more consequence than fashion, and dress, and dissipation.

The expense of the School Library is a small matter. The law authorizes districts to raise the sum of thirty dollars by taxation, the first year, and ten dollars each succeeding year, for this purpose. Many districts have adopted this plan. In others, the necessary amount is raised by contribution. Most of the heads of families, and many young men and women, in each district, are able to give a dollar. Nor would it harm the rich to give more. In this way the requisite sum might be raised in a few days, and a stock of good books brought within the reach of all. Thousands there are, who needlessly spend many dollars in a year in diversions, in sleigh-rides, or in various unprofitable ways, and think they can well afford it. Let them not plead poverty, when required to contribute to their own and others' good ; nor withhold, because the whole benefit is not secured to themselves. If it be necessary to make a sacrifice of some amusement, or merely personal gratification, to enable them to give a dollar to the Library,—let them consider whether a temporary, selfish gratification should stand in the way of a permanent source of rational pleasure. Even the most selfish, avaricious man feels the better for having made such a sacrifice. The money cannot pass from his purse without severe, painful throes, but when it has once got free, he feels a consciousness of having done good. And however the pleasure of that consciousness may be diminished by the knowledge of his reluctance, there can be no doubt, that he places himself on a higher elevation, on account of an action that results in good to others.

Mr. Editor, the time is approaching for the annual district-school meetings. I hope that our citizens will bear this in mind,—and be prepared to propose either a tax or a subscription for the purpose of furnishing the district with the School Library. J. M. M.

KNOW THYSELF ! This commandment seems more especially to have been given to those men who are apt to make remarks on other men's actions, and forget themselves.

He who is anxious to know thoroughly what he ought to be, should study those who exhibit what he is not ; as a man sees his own defects best in a correct form.

It is not very difficult for men to know themselves, if they take but proper pains to inquire into themselves ; but they are more solicitous to be thought what they should be, than really careful to be what they ought to be.

Good children are flowers, in the garden of God.

ON THE USE OF THE BLACK-BOARD.

[For the Common School Journal.]

MR. EDITOR: Will you give me a little corner in your truly estimable Journal, to say a word in behalf of that very simple and incomparably valuable, though much-neglected appendage of the schoolroom, the *black-board*? I am inclined to think its value, as an accompaniment of the schoolroom, is little known. I have been in several schools, this winter, and heard from many others, and in only one have I learned that any considerable use is made of it. This winter, while on a visit to one of the central towns in Middlesex county, I put the question to the clergyman, one of the school committee, whether their schools were furnished with black-boards? "No," he replied; "it is of no use to get them. If we had black-boards, we have no teachers that can use them to advantage." I was at once astonished and mortified at such an announcement.

"Schools without black-boards, and without teachers that can use them! I should feel in the schoolroom, without the black-board, as though the *last plank* had been taken from under me!" exclaimed I.

I am no theorist, Mr. Editor, but a plain working-man, who, from necessity, or inclination, or both, or some other cause, have been made familiar with the scenes, trials, wants, modes, and expedients of the schoolroom, for many years. I speak from long experience, when I testify to the utilities of this simple, homely piece of school furniture. I would call the attention of my worthy coadjutors in education, throughout the Commonwealth, members of school committees and teachers, to its merits. For children and teachers' sake, for learning's sake, for humanity's sake, would that I could place one of them in every school in our State!

The inventor or introducer of the black-board system deserves to be ranked among the best contributors to learning and science, if not among the greatest benefactors of mankind; and so he will be regarded by all who know its merits, and are familiar with schoolroom trials.

Let every town put in each of its schoolhouses, next summer, a good black-board, and a good teacher, "*who can use it*;" and the effect will be about the same as doubling the number of teachers and school hours, in that town, or adding a hundred per cent. to the school tax, and all the effective means of education which they possess.

"But what are the peculiar virtues of the black-board?" cries one and then another, in his doubt and impatience. "Let us hear them." I grant it is more than time I had come to this subject. The advantage of good, visible illustrations, all admit. No one questions it. What comes in through the eye, we get a clearer and more distinct impression of; it makes a deeper impression, is longer remembered, and more easily retained, than what is obtained through the other senses. Of this, diagrams, paintings, specimens, models, illustrative of principles in the various sciences, especially in astronomy, are proof. Show a boy who has never seen one, a hat, or a plough, and he will get a better idea of it by inspection, in five minutes, than he could possibly obtain from twenty pages of description.

The black-board is valuable in teaching a great many of the schoolroom branches,—arithmetic, geometry, algebra,—all the departments

of grammar, viz. orthography, verbal inflections, syntax, and punctuation. In geography, for drafting maps; in natural philosophy, for figures and diagrams illustrating principles; in penmanship; in all these, to say nothing of botany, anatomy, and physiology, it is a most valuable auxiliary. Consider it in reference to the teacher. In no other way can he teach so much or so well in these branches, as by means of the black-board. A teacher wishes to explain a principle in grammatical construction, or in algebra,—as the application of general formulas to individual examples,—or in natural philosophy, or arithmetic. He calls up a class of ten, twenty-five, or fifty, or even the whole school, (for it is of little consequence how many,) before the board, states the principle, and lays before them the illustration, and the whole process by which a result is reached, in less time and with more effect than it could possibly be done in any other way. And if a pupil is to give his teacher proof of his acquaintance with principles, and their applications in these branches, where and how can he do it more satisfactorily than at the black-board? The pupil comes out with his slate full of “sums,” all wrought out very exactly. This is well enough. But what is it compared with the evidence he gives his teacher by solving readily, and in a workmanlike manner, two or three questions only on the black-board, right under the eye of his teacher?

Nor is it only, or chiefly, in arithmetic and the higher branches, that the black-board can be rendered serviceable. Far otherwise. There is no school in which it is more useful than in infantile and primary schools. In no way can a teacher of such schools entertain and profit her pupils more than by the black-board,—marking, drawing, and explaining, herself, and allowing and teaching her pupils to mark and draw the same things. Give them certain forms or letters to imitate, and they will entertain and teach themselves by the half hour together; which is far better than pinching each other, pulling hair, or doing mischief.

Again; the black-board is valuable on examination-day, and to the committee. How soon and how easily may a committee be able to decide, by the help of the black-board, whether a scholar or a class knows any thing! In five minutes, they can get more than, I had almost said, in five hours, in any other way. In the ordinary method, the committee get very little idea of the mode of a scholar's working, or the style of his execution.

Were there not danger of extending this article to too great length, I would go into a more particular exemplification of my point, by giving examples and illustrations in all the branches above named. This I may do at some future period, if you will allow me.

I am sure that not only is the black-board of great utility, but that in the schoolroom there is no substitute for it. Of all the French schools and lecture-rooms, the black-board is an inseparable companion. And where do they teach more effectually than in France? Go into the anatomical lecture-room. You see the professor, and near him the black-board, chalk, and sponge. He describes an arm, leg, joint, muscle, or nerve, and if he has not before him the *real* subject, he turns to the black-board, and with a few strokes of his chalk, lays it before you.

I will only add, as an additional recommendation of this article, that

it is very cheap. A smooth, clear piece of painted board, and a piece of chalk and sponge, are all that are needed. The whole expense would not probably exceed four shillings and sixpence. And the whole side of a schoolroom might be lined with black-board for less than three dollars. And yet the pupils in most of our schools, some of which are standing literally in the midst of pine woods, are suffering beyond calculation for the want of a black-board!

It may be, if you are indulgent enough to give this a place, I shall grow bold to trouble you again.

N. S. L.

P. S. Since writing the above, the following facts incidentally came to my knowledge, which are so much to my purpose that I cannot refrain from giving them publicity.

A first-rate teacher in one of our district schools, which had been furnished with only a very small black-board, of which he made little use, firmly believing, and stoutly maintaining that slates answered as well, if not even better, was at length induced, by the urgent request of a friend, to try what virtue there is in the black-board. Near the close of his school, he purchased, at his own expense, two, of size so ample as to extend nearly across his room. Going into his school a few days since, I found him and his arithmetic class busy as bees at the black-board. After school was dismissed, he came to me and said, "What a fine thing is my black-board! I verily believe if I had procured it at the *commencement*, instead of the *close*, of my term, I might have effected twice as much in my school as I have this winter." Is not this testimony worth something? Are any still incredulous? Let them try. I would engage to pay for every black-board introduced into our district schools, which, judiciously used, does not almost work miracles. It is especially valuable in the primary school, to teach beginners to read and spell by.

SUMMER SCHOOLS.

[The season for the commencement of our summer schools is near. Are the teachers as near to being qualified to teach them, as they are to being taught? As the teachers' opportunity for a preparation to teach diminishes, does their want of qualification to teach diminish, in an equal ratio? Which event will arrive first,—the opening of the schools, or the fitness of the teachers to take charge of them?

In our last year's volume we inserted a series of articles which might serve, to some extent, as guides and helps to those who were to keep the summer schools. Our hope was to inspire teachers with higher motives, to throw some light upon their path of duty, and to make their labors more easy for themselves, and more useful to their pupils. We have been requested to republish some of those articles at the present time, but must refer our readers to the volume itself. A similar course, however, as far as practicable, will be pursued the present year.

The time has come for committee men to be more cautious and vigilant in the selection and examination of teachers, than they have hitherto been; for it must no longer be deemed a sufficient qualification

for rearing an immortal mind, that one is incompetent to do any thing else for a subsistence. The time has come, when the responsible task of guiding and training the young, without having first read, and studied, and reflected, upon the subject of education, can no longer be innocently assumed. The time has come, when those who offer their services as teachers, or who accept an offer made to them by others, can no longer hold themselves guiltless, if they undertake this employment without having first perused with care more or less of the standard works on education, which are now accessible to all. This is an employment for which no one is fully prepared by Nature. Hence a preliminary course of instruction,—or, at any rate, a preliminary course of reading, study, and meditation, is indispensable in order to obtain a knowledge of principles, and some definite plans in regard to the art, means, or processes for instructing and governing a school; and they who rashly venture upon these untried duties, and who thereby peril the welfare of so many children, without first availing themselves of all possible means of preparation for the arduous and responsible work,—can no longer be held guiltless, in the sight of God or man.

We have received from one of the most wise and experienced teachers in the State, a long article, replete with admirable advice and suggestions to those who are purposing to keep school, the ensuing summer. We commence its publication in the present Number, and earnestly commend it to all our readers. Ed.]

[For the Common School Journal.]

MR. EDITOR: If you think the testimony of one who has had many years' experience in *teaching*, will be of any value to those who are about entering this field of labor, please give the following a place in the Common School Journal.

Yours,

P. C.

TO FEMALES PURPOSING TO BECOME TEACHERS.

No. I.

I address you as your elder brother and friend. Abating his divine commission, I feel that I may speak to you, in some sort, as Paul the aged. Will you indulge me with a hearing? I wish to speak of the office of Teacher, (which every year seems to me more sacred and momentous,) of its qualifications, duties, and responsibilities. I shall speak kindly, but with great plainness.

You are purposing to become teachers,—to keep school. You wish, no doubt, to keep a good school, to subserve the cause of education. She who does not desire to keep a *good* school, would do better not to keep at all. You wish to satisfy yourselves, your conscience, your pupils, and your employers; and it may be you are not without the laudable ambition of *honoring* your profession. To accomplish all this, is no small affair.

First of all, let me ask you to sit down and *count the cost*. COUNT THE COST. Consider well the labor you must perform, the trials you must endure, the sacrifices of ease and comfort you must make, to secure this end,—a *good school*. Again I say, *Count the cost*. It is a grave and weighty matter. Sift well your motives. Look to your qualifications. Consider the labors and responsibilities of the calling.

Is your *heart* given to this work? It is a great thing to know ourselves. This is a great lesson to learn. Some never learn it. They never find out what they are fit for. They are plunging beyond their depth, and thus in danger of drowning themselves, instead of saving others.

A teacher undertakes to erect a spiritual building. Let her consider whether she has wherewith to finish it. She is setting out on a spiritual warfare. Let her consider whether she has means to meet the ten thousand foes which lie in ambush, and which will beset her path and impede her progress. Let her interrogate her own soul. Let her go into the secret depths of her own spirit, and there take counsel. What are your motives, my friends, in going into this business? Let this question be candidly answered to yourselves. Is it worldly ambition, or honor, or fame, or ease, or wealth? Is it any, or all of these, which move you to this work? I hesitate not to declare, that they are motives immeasurably beneath the high destination, the sacred calling, of a teacher. They are of the earth, earthy. Disappointment must surely be the result. Few, very few, become rich by teaching. A moderate compensation is all that even a good teacher can expect. And in regard to honor, (as the world counts honor or fame, or awards its meed of praise,) can the teacher of the humble district school, or of any school, look for it? Verily, she must not seek honor of men. She must look for it in the secret depths of her own soul, in the convictions of an approving conscience, and in the approbation of Him, whose eye seeth in secret, and whose approving sentence will reward us openly.

So, also, have they mistaken the nature of the calling, who regard it as holding out the promise of a life of ease.

It would be difficult, indeed, to name a calling in which indolence would be sure of being *useful*; but we can confidently say, if there is any, it is not teaching. This has always been accounted a laborious calling. It has become doubly so, in these latter days, by reason of excitement and competition, and especially excitement on the subject of education. If one would secure success here, it must be at the cost of much time, labor, and strength. It is a warfare, in which body, soul, and spirit must participate, and sustain a burden. Let the lover of ease, then, seek it any where rather than in the schoolroom. The teacher's life is, and must be, a life of toil. She must love to labor, and to labor almost to weariness and exhaustion. From this there can be no discharge. But the yoke will be comparatively easy, and the burden light, to one who has well counted the cost, and has assumed the responsibility with right views and motives. Such a one will find her support and her reward in the depths of her own soul; in the gratification of her own benevolent nature; in the deep interest she feels in the human race, and in the evidence which opens to her mind, fresh and new every day, that her labors are not in vain. Amidst toil and exhaustion, tried by the dulness and stupidity of children, the unreasonableness and ingratitude of parents, when the heart may be ready to faint, this consideration, like a well of refreshing water, gushes up in the soul to revive the fainting spirit. This comes to her relief and support, when nothing else would come. Hence it is well for a teacher, if she can find in the capacities of her own soul a large share of

benevolence, a deep interest in humanity,—in humanity in its lowest conditions and most repulsive forms,—such an interest as will give buoyancy and elasticity both to mind and spirit, whenever she can say or do aught for its advancement.

Many think they would like to keep school ; but they associate the feeling with neat, commodious, airy, and well-furnished schoolrooms, with children cleanly, well-trained, and quick of apprehension, and a generous salary. Alas ! it is the happiness of *few*, very few, if happiness it is, to secure places like these. We want those to enlist, who can look forward, with pleasure, to the rude, unadorned, and inconvenient schoolroom, filled with the children of the lowly, the ignorant, and the degraded, all unattractive as they may be, as the field of labor, and count it all joy that they are privileged with such an opportunity of watering the buddings of young humanity ; of guiding the infant and juvenile curiosity, in its incipient workings, to faith, to duty, to happiness, to God. This is the spirit that moved and animated the great Teacher, who sought out the lowly and degraded, the publicans and sinners, that he might eat with them, and enlighten and save them.

When I think of teachers and teachers' qualifications, my heart involuntarily exclaims, "O give me more of the spirit which sympathizes with the poor, the wretched, the lame, and blind." This is the spirit which must renovate the world.

Again ; happy will it be for one who is looking forward to this profession, to be possessed of an active conscientiousness,—a deep sense of *responsibility*. She must not be one who will be satisfied, herself, with what would satisfy the law, or custom, or her employers ; or with her regular, every-day, six hours' labor. She should be satisfied with nothing short of all she can accomplish for the advancement of her pupils. She is aware, that she is to deal with pupils at that age which, of all the periods of life, is the most susceptible of impressions. She is tremblingly alive to the influence which her own example, opinions, and instructions, may have upon the character and destinies of a single immortal soul. She feels that she is training up fathers and mothers of families, members of society, citizens of the world, and candidates for eternity. She reflects that her influence may reach much further than to her immediate pupils ; that it may extend even to remote generations, and to every calling of human life. And these considerations move her to become, in all things, a pattern to her pupils, and a workman that needeth not to be ashamed of her work. This deep sense of responsibility leads her to weigh well her plans and measures ; to examine well her motives and principles ; to try experiments carefully, and adopt hypotheses cautiously ; for she believes they may work mighty consequences, for weal or for woe, to her pupils in coming time. She feels, therefore, more than a solemn injunction laid upon her to take heed unto her steps. She is more than ever careful to run into no excess or indulgence, extravagance or exposure ; to guard against whatever may affect her character or health, inflame her passions, sour her temper, or becloud her understanding, so that her pupils may receive from her the utmost amount of good it is in her power to bestow. Fashionable, and any other dissipation, late hours, or any thing else which may unfit her for the next day's schoolroom duties, she must and will forego. Indeed, this deep sense of responsibility, to her mind,

reflects a color and tinge on every part of her work, and makes it quite another thing than it otherwise would be. It causes her to do many things which otherwise would be left undone; and, on the contrary, to leave undone not a few which otherwise she would do. This sense of responsibility makes a teacher particular about what are termed small matters;—and this is well; for they are small matters which make up the interests, relations, and duties of life. I have known the peace of many families, societies, and neighborhoods, disturbed and broken up by *little* difficulties. I have known great estates accumulated by saving little gains, or wasted by little, needless expenses. I have known a sound constitution and robust health ruined by a little excess long indulged. I have known a fair reputation all darkened and dishonored by a little folly and indiscretion. I have known many a heart wounded and broken with a few unkind words. It is not by great faults, ordinarily, that we ruin estates, or health, or character, or life, but by the indiscretions, neglects, inadvertencies, and the thousand nameless *follies*, of which we take no note. I have known some schools broken up, I have known more decline, and more still become of little repute and value. But this was seldom caused by great faults. It has almost always been owing to remissness in little things. I would finally hope, that all of you who may engage in this arduous and responsible employment, may know nothing but the most complete success; but if failure there must be, I venture to predict that, in by far the greater number of cases, it will arise from inattention to little things. Little errors, and faults, and indiscretions, neglected, will grow into evils which can neither be endured nor corrected.

The teacher of active conscientiousness and a deep sense of responsibility, will not treat with neglect, or regard with indifference, the least matter that affects the character, improvement, or happiness of her pupils, or the conveniences and pleasantness of her schoolroom, in order to provide for her own comfort. She is not easily persuaded that any thing, how trifling soever, which may affect the interests of her school, can be of little or no importance. She looks at remote consequences, as well as *immediate* effects; and the little matters, of which others would take no note, assume, in her regard, an importance which no language can describe or numbers estimate. In the order, neatness, and quiet of her schoolroom, and in the manners and habits of her pupils, even in respect to what are usually thought matters of indifference, she sees an important value, as affecting the formation of character; and then they become objects of constant and especial regard. The order of her desk, the neatness of her person, her attitude and movements,—all these, as going to influence and shape the character of the young, assume, in her eyes, importance.

P. C.

It is as necessary to know what to say and what to do, in order to excite the moral sentiments and to subdue the animal propensities of children, as it is for one who would extinguish fires to know whether to pour on oil or water.